Informational Interviewing

WHAT IS INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING?

Informational Interviewing is a meeting with a professional who is currently in the field or type of job you would like to have. It is a great way to learn about career fields and talk to people about your current job or career path.

WITH WHOM?

Build a list of people you connected to, or are working in a field of interest
Speak with: Career Services, Alumni relations, Faculty contacts, Former employers, Professional associations, Company websites, family, friends, church members, friends of friends, etc.

HOW?

Arrange the interview via email or phone. Conduct the interview in person at their place of work or by phone if distance makes the meeting impractical. Below is a general script to help you prepare for contact:

“Hello, (Dr., Ms., Mr.) ______________________. My name is ___________________ and I am currently a student at George Fox University (majoring in or studying) __________________. I would like to find out more about your work at _________________________ and your experience working in (his/her industry of field). I’m wondering if you have 10-15 minutes to speak with me about your experience.”

Some companies will say no. Don’t be discouraged, move on to the next company or person on your list.

TIPS?

- Do some background research about the person/company/industry before your meeting. Use The Occupational Outlook Handbook for more insight into industry: www.bls.gov/ooh
- Dress professionally and act as if this is an interview, but don’t expect a job.
- Firm handshake, eye contact, smile, show your interest.
- Show up 5 - 10 minutes early, but no earlier.
- Take notes
- Always ask the interviewee for a referral or another person they may know who can give you more insights and advice
- Leave your business card and ask for theirs - create business cards through vistaprint.com. This is the smoothest way to stay connected.

**WHAT DO I ASK?**

- How did you get your start in this career?
- How did you prepare for entry into this field? Did you have any specialized training or earn a specific degree?
- How is this field growing or changing? Do you see any trends?
- What type of people do well in this field?
- What do new professionals in this field need in terms of training and education?
- What type of internships, part-time or volunteer experiences are best suited to this field?
- What are the qualifications you would look for in a recent graduate looking to enter this field?
- What are the most enjoyable and the most challenging aspects of your job?
- What is your typical workday like?
- Do you have any other suggestions for someone interested in this field?
- Do you know of other professionals I can speak with who can give me more insights and guidance?

**AFTERWARDS?**

- **Re-evaluate your interest**: Did anything surprise you about the field or make you think differently about your interest? Be willing to reformulate your goals if you’ve realized that the position is not a fit
- **Follow-Up**: Send a thank you card or email - handwritten notes go a long way and show genuine appreciation and interest. Send it by mail the same day or the next. Email can also be helpful, but make sure you send it before that day is over.
- **Maintain contact**: Stay in touch by email. Offer to meet up for coffee once in a while and reconnect about their work and interests. This should not be approached as a one-time encounter.